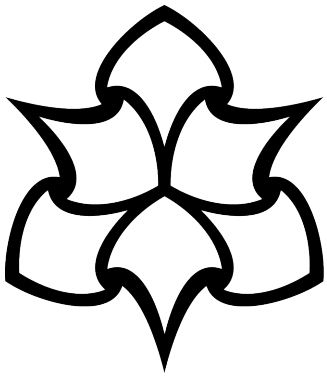

Illustrations -

Fake of Sarah Palin toting a gun (above)
Picture by Chadwick of tube after 7/7 bombings (?)
Picture of Kennedy assassination, Zapruder - frame 150 (?)
Anything by Eric Salomon or Jacob Riis

Citizens' photojournalism:
History's New First Draft
by David Brittain

When they write the history of the recent "Arab Spring" uprisings of 2010 and 2011 it will not be illustrated by the professional media, but by ordinary citizens. Wadah Khanfar, former director general of the Al-Jazeera television network, explains: "When the Tunisian revolution broke out we didn't have reporters or cameramen there, but we had a tool that cannot be controlled by the authorities: active young people reporting live from the squares, sending video footage and calls for freedom."[1] The catalyst that helped the people topple the regimes in the Middle East and North Africa was interactive media such as Facebook and Twitter. While it is misleading, to suggest that authorities were powerless to intervene - some cut off the internet and the mobile phone networks to thwart activists - they could not, ultimately, prevent ordinary people exploiting the technology. Government-

[1] http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/06/20116161142011361.html

controlled media were bypassed as images were shared with the rest of the world, and citizens acted in the place of banned reporters. Since these heady events, newspapers and TV networks everywhere have adjusted to a world in which citizens' photography has moved from being a supplement of news to an alternative source of news with its own outlets and distribution channels.

Who are the citizen photographers? They include Mostafa Bahgat a self-taught video-maker and witness to some of the worst clashes between the army and the demonstrators in Tahrir Square. They include amateur photographers like Charles Porter. Porter took a famous snap of a fireman holding a dead baby at the scene of the 1995 bombing of a federal government building in Oklahoma City. They include victims of disasters such as the commuter Alexander Chadwick that photographed in the tunnels following the London 7/7 bombings. Others are drawn from the ranks of bystanders, activists, regular and rebel soldiers. Many citizen photographers are also bloggers. What they all have in common is that they were in the right place at the right time to bear witness to a significant event. James Wallace, editor-and-chief of the Toronto Sun argues that the difference between the professional and the citizen photojournalist is motivation. "Citizens do it out of commitment and interest or other personal reasons," he says. "For professionals, it is their job." [2]When The Guardian asked Mostafa Bahgat why he puts his life in danger to record protests he replied, "If I'm not there to record what is happening then the lies of the state will go unchallenged."[3]

[2] http://j-source.ca/article/rise-and-complications-citizen-photojournalism
[3] Shenker J, Shots seen round the world: the cameraman at the heart of Tahrir Guardian 3 Dec 2011

Citizens' photojournalism is popularly portrayed as something new, a game-changer made possible by digital cameras and the internet. It is in fact part of a wider phenomenon of citizen journalism, or user generated content (UGC) as it is sometimes known. Hayley Watson distinguishes between "dependent" and "independent" citizen journalism[4]. Dependent forms rely on broadcasters for dissemination. As Wadah Khanfar notes, "This people's media couldn't have played the vital role it did on its own, but by reaching out to [Al Jazeera] it was able to reach millions around the world."[5] All kinds of content shelters within this category. Well known examples that appeared in the international media in 2011 include dramatic images of the Japanese tsunami as it struck and shaky footage of the capture and grim slaughter of Muammar Gadaffi by Libyan opposition soldiers. Sub-genres of dependent UGC that have acquired their own newsworthiness include the suicide-bomber's video and its grisly cousin, the execution video. Another media sub-genre is so-called "sousveillance" (*sous* is French for below) in which citizens on the ground turn cameras against the powerful that impose surveillance (*sur* is French from above). A celebrated example concerns a fatal assault on a London newsvendor, Ian Tomlinson at the 2009 G20 summit. The story broke after activists leaked to the press a video of Tomlinson being struck by a police officer.[6]
Independent citizen journalism is, by contrast, conducted via the participant's own systems of communication, including blogs and social networking sites like Flickr

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[4] Watson H, Preconditions for Citizen Journalism: A Sociological Assessment, Sociological Research. online, August 2011, http://www.socresonline.org.uk/16/3/6.html

[5] http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/06/20116161142011361.html
[6] http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2009/apr/07/video-g20-police-assault

where they can be shared with others or viewed by browsers. More and more, images from websites enter the mainstream news. Typically, reporters will use Facebook to learn more about a person's personal details. In a bizarre extension of citizen journalism, a suspicious member of the British public used Google to unearth incriminating pictures of a "missing" canoeist, John Darwin and his wife that helped convict them. These banal snaps, that had evaded police and reporters, made headlines in 2007.

There is nothing new about the use by the press of non-professional photographs. This has a long history. Noted precedents include Abraham Zapruder's film record of the assassination of President Kennedy in 1963 and a video of Los Angeles police beating Rodney King in 1991. In both cases bystanders supplied the images and stills were reproduced many times as testimony to these events. This kind of opportunistic content used to be relatively rarely used. But as picture desks and social networking sites become more closely interconnected, there are more and more sensational images on tap - images such as the infamous snapshots from inside Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq that revealed scenes that no photojournalist would have been able to witness. Intended as soldiers' mementos, they caused universal outrage and embarrassment once leaked to the press. It has even been argued that easy accessibility to such images has contributed to a bias towards "an event-driven discourse" in news. [7]This helps to explain why the artless amateur photograph, often taken with a camera phone, is now acceptable as a proper news image.

[7] Schudson M, Four Approaches to the Sociology of News in Eds Curran J and Gurevitch, Mass Media and Society

The topic of UGC has engaged many commentators. Some, such as Barbie Zelizer, find precedents for the phenomenon. She places citizen journalists in a long line of "outliers" that have shaped the press from the margins rather than at the core. These include Charles Dickens, George Orwell, Tom Wolfe, Joan Didion and so on. Zelizer's definition of outliers encompasses satirists and filmmakers such as Oliver Stone (whose film JFK - about the Kennedy assassination - posed questions "that reporters missed") as well as unnamed photographers[8]. A list of outlier photographers might include visual innovators such as Jacob Riis. This Danish-born "muck-raking" reporter and activist worked in late 19th century New York where he taught himself flash photography. Riis used his rudimentary images to bolster a campaign against poverty waged in newspaper articles, public lectures and his book, How The Other Half Lives (1890). Others would include the German photographer, Erich Salomon, whose candid style of depicting the rich and powerful broke the mould. Even the famous Henri Cartier-Bresson, inventor of the term "the decisive moment", was not an "insider" to journalism but an artist that brought a surrealist sensibility to reporting. Zelizer argues that such examples suggest, "who is a journalist and what constitutes journalism remain categories to be challenged on craft, professional, moral, political, economic and technical grounds." [9]

A turning point for "dependent" citizens' photography, most experts agree, was the aftermath of the July 7 bombings of the London transport system in 2005.

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[8] Zelizer B, The Culture of Journalism, in Eds Curran J and Gurevitch, Mass Media and Society 4th edition Hodder Arnold

[9] Zelizer B, The Culture of Journalism, n Eds Curran J and Gurevitch, Mass Media and Society 4th edition Hodder Arnold

Within hours of the atrocity Alexander Chadwick's grainy image from the tunnels below the capital was displayed on BBC's website, to be followed by exposure in newspapers in UK and USA.[10] Jeff Borenstein described its impact. "Readers witnessed a crude but striking representation of what life was like moments after the explosion in the tube — its rawness unmatched by professional images, its authenticity compounded by Chadwick 'having-been-there.' "[11] This image was part of a deluge of some 1,000 stills and videos, 4,000 texts and 20,000 e-mails received by the BBC within six hours of the atrocity[12] Helen Boaden, then BBC Director of News, commented: "What an incredible resource. Twenty-four hour television was sustained as never before by contributions from the audience; one piece on the Six O'Clock News was produced entirely from pieces of user-generated content. At the BBC, we knew then that we had to change. We would need to review our ability to ingest this kind of material and our editorial policies to take account of these new forms of output." [13]The phenomenon persuaded writer Dennis Dunleavy that, "…the digital camera phone is the future and we have much to learn from this emerging technology." [14]

Such proponents have welcomed citizen's journalism for bringing new urgency and increased participation to news-gathering, others because it seems to

[10] Soon after, Associated Press in New York contacted the commuter that took the photograph that appeared on the BBC website and syndicated the images world-wide.

[11] http://gnovisjournal.org/2009/05/13/camera-phone-images-how-london-bombings-2005-shaped-form-news/
[12] www.nieman.harvard.edu
[13] http://www.socresonline.org.uk/16/3/6.html#boaden2008
[14] Dunleavey D., "Camera Phones Prevail: Citizen Shutterbugs and the London Bombings," *The Digital Journalist,* July 2005.

embody a long-cherished ideal of a truly democratic press. Opponents of UGC have viewed its advance with concern, however. Among the most vocal of these have been professional photographers that consider citizen photojournalists as rivals. While many of them would understand the unique power and importance of images - such as the 7/7 London underground images - and would defend their use, they would oppose reliance on UGC. Many images that are uploaded to news organisations tend to be low quality because they are grabbed from amateur videos, and professionals claim the untrained eye of amateurs can never compare with theirs when in producing coherent representations. Certainly journalists must set and uphold standards. Yet as the blogger and author, Dan Gillmor writes, decisions about images tend to be based on topicality, not aesthetic quality. "Will [UGC] threaten professional photographers who capture images so well for news organisations today? I hope not. Their skills are far beyond the mine and most amateurs. But we have to be ready to capture images when the pros aren't around; even a poorly composed photo of a pivotal event is better than no picture at all."[15] Gillmor hopes more writers will carry cameras. Posterity, after all, doesn't favour the professional image maker over the amateur where great news pictures are concerned.

Because so many professional photographers are freelance, there are suspicions that citizens' photography represents the thin end of a wedge than will end with the loss of their livelihoods. This is because amateur content tends to be cheaper to acquire and easier to appropriate. Blogger and photographer, Sion

[15] Gillmore D., We The Media: Grassroots Journalism by the People, for the People, O'Reilly Media 2006, 131

Touhig writes: "It's a race to the bottom, and is a fundamental failure by publishers to invest in their businesses for their readers' benefit. It has consequently put massive pressure on professional photographers, who have to reduce their rates, or submit to copyright grabs themselves in order to get work, which is drying up and being replaced by stolen audience content." [16] But the specter of a tidal wave of royalty-free images may be receding as new breed of photo agencies professionalises the sector, negotiating fair rates for citizens' pictures and videos. One of them, Demotix, represents what they call "street photographers", a term that refuses to distinguish between opportunists, amateur documentary photographers and experienced freelancers. The agency's name derives from "the form of writing used and most easily understood by the man in the Alexandrian street in 200 BC". Demotix is proud that its image-makers have strong personal opinions. Clyde Bentley, of the Missouri School of Journalism, contrasts compares this approach to the "neutrality" of the professional. “The main difference between traditional journalism and citizen journalism is that traditional journalists are sent out to cover things they don’t really care about; in other words, the next city council meeting isn’t going to make or break their lives. But a citizen journalist is not out to cover something, but to share it. For them, they want to tell everybody about their passion.” [17] Demotix Organisers showcases images by its their international membership on the web site but also market them to a network of over 200

[16] http://www.theregister.co.uk/2006/12/29/photojournalism_and_copyright/
[17] http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/100558/The-Future-Is-Here-But-Do-News-Media-Companies-See-It.aspx

mainstream outlets including the BBC, CNN, NBC and the New York Times. Royalties are split 50-50.

Given the resistance among photographers to digital culture, it is perhaps ironic that we now know more than ever about their opinions because so many write or comment on blogs. The main reason professionals give for opposing UGC is that it is untrustworthy. Images from unknown sources cannot be easily authenticated and the internet is awash with compelling fakes. Digital technology, including PhotoShop, makes it almost impossible to detect tampering. One fake appears to show the American politician, Sarah Palin, clad in a bikini and gleefully brandishing an assault rifle. Apparently, it appeared online shortly after John McCain selected Palin as his running mate in the 2008 US election. In the event, it was exposed as a seamless grafting of Palin's head onto another woman's body by means of PhotoShop. It is the responsibility of journalists to decide what is truthful. When a fake *is* accepted as real it often has dire consequences for those concerned. In 2004 the London Daily Mirror published falsified photos of British soldiers abusing an Iraqi prisoner. After the truth was exposed the editor-in-chief was sacked.

The pre-digitisation press was no stranger to manipulated or "enhanced" images. Cropping and retouching have long been commonplace, but photographers themselves employed other, more subtle practices. The LIFE picture editor, Wilson Hicks, recalls how the famous W. Eugene Smith "re-created" his famous photo essay, "The Spanish Village". "For the camera they enacted consciously what they theretofore had done unconsciously; they did what they were used to doing better

than they were used to doing it. In re-creating an actuality, Smith gave to it more power and beauty than it had originally." [18] All this goes to show is underlies the fact that the truth that photographs are thought to embody is always contingent - and is not, as some photographers argue, the speciality of a trusted elite. Sensitive to criticism, agencies such as Demotix and France's Citizenside take pains to reassure clients that they check facts and guarantee the authenticity of their members' content. The organisers of Citizenside claim they have created a tool that can detect whether a user's photograph has been modified, online. [19] As information networks continue to converge, news outlets are tapping directly into social networking sites. In an early example of this, images from Flickr (the image-sharing web site) were sought by journalist Rob Walker to illustrate an article in the New York Times magazine about Martin Luther Boulevards. Walker has written that he was attracted to the idea of "throw[ing] it open to others" and having an "unlimited number of people contributing". [20]

An interesting model is that of Buzznet.com (a smaller rival to Flickr with 150,000 registered users in 2005) that is proactive in its relationship with big media outlets. Buzznet's community of users is considered to be more attuned to a reportage approach, and in 2005 the organisation collaborated with the Sun-Herald on a website about Hurricane Katrina, "crowdsourced" from its members[21]. Such deals take advantage of the global and networked nature of the site and are

[18] Hicks W, Words and Pictures: An introduction to Photojournalism
[19] http://www.editorsweblog.org/analysis/2009/02/citizenside_is_there_a_future_for_citize.php
[20] ww.flickr.com/groups/mlkblvd
[21] Shayne Bowman and Chris Willis regret that such use of ugc tended to be minimal and "clearly segregated from the main coverage." http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/100558/The-Future-Is-Here-But-Do-News-Media-Companies-See-It.aspx

designed to benefit both organisations. Buzznet founder Marc Brown explained: "Generally it's a monthly license fee, and a revenue split for advertising". Buzznet publicises this commercial relationship with clients such as the Houston Chronicle and the Miami Herald to recruit members. As these developments suggest, distinctions between independent and dependent content are breaking down. Dan Gillmor predicts that UGC will become less reliant for its impact on mainstream media, "as social media become the news-access tools of choice for a new generation that consumes, produces and shares news in varying ways".[22]

In the press, photographers were among the very first to feel the changes brought by the internet. Darkrooms closed, technicians were retrained or laid off, and lap tops and modems replaced gadget bags as the signature tools of photographers on assignment. Then came the threat from the outliers. The fear by professionals that their skills and expertise are unrecognized by the industry is not new but grounded in an old conflict that has seen generations of photographers and editors pitted against each other. When the forerunners of the modern photojournalist emerged at the end of the 1920s in Europe they were viewed with suspicion because they deployed "miniature" camera such as the 35 mm format Leica. Photographers such as Salomon, Martin Munkacsi, André Kertész and Tim Gidal revolutionised the press and made the candid snapshot the norm. For some, such as the powerful director of photography at MoMA, John Szarkowski, that period was a "golden age" when photographers and editors basked in mutual respect. After the war, LIFE magazine in the US continued the tradition of small

[22] http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/06/20116161142011361.html

cameras and extended photo-essays, but relations between photographers and writers were less equitable than in the past. The acclaimed photojournalist, W. Eugene Smith, became a mythical figure among fellow photographers by resigning from LIFE. This happened after editors refused him creative control of pictures he took of Albert Schweitzer's African mission. Smith argued that he'd won the "moral right" to creative control by virtue of winning the trust of his subjects. As Barbie Zelizer shows, while editors recognised the value of photographers, they took a long time to accept them as "journalists". "Photojournalists only became ranking members of the journalistic profession in the 1940s, a full 80 years after images made their way into the news, and only 50 years later did they take on leadership positions." [23]It is often recounted[24] that conflict between photographers and press proprietors over the ownership of negatives and copyright provided the impetus for the founding, in 1947, of the celebrated Magnum photo agency. The influential Szarkowski supported Smith, arguing that the trust between photographers and editors was being eroded by the corporatization of the press.

"Popular magazines, newspapers, outdoor advertising and television programmes are conceived as experiences to be flipped through, driven past or glanced at, and it would be irrational and small-minded to belabour them for succeeding at their appointed task. It can however be reported without prejudice that many of today's

[23] (205)
[24] see Russell Millar, Magnum Secker & Warburg 1997

best photographers are fundamentally bored with the mass media, and do not view it as a creative opportunity."[25]

The example and the practices of the elite of "concerned photographers" of Magnum, and the rhetoric of persuasive champions such as Szarkowski, became an inspiration for all photojournalists. Interestingly, it is these standards – of high moral principle and artistic integrity - that photographers invoke in defense of their profession - and, indeed, press freedom - against the tide of UGC. But the gap between the ideal and the real is being exposed as the modern press photographer, instead of being perceived as a paragon, comes to personify the excesses of the modern press in the internet era.

Photojournalists sometimes set themselves apart from the citizen photojournalist because they say they abide by professional codes of practice. The findings of the 2001 Leveson Inquiry into press practices suggest such codes are ineffective, in the UK at least. The Leveson Inquiry was instituted in the wake of a phone-hacking scandal that led the mighty News International to close the tabloid, The News of the World. It had emerged in 2009 that journalists paid a private detective to access the phones of thousands of people in public life. The illegally obtained information was passed on to photographers, as well as journalists. Witness after witness, from all walks of life, implicated photographers ("the paparazzi") with the harassment and manipulation they claim to have suffered. In a

[25] Szarkowski J, Photography and the mass media
Creative Camera, February 1969.
This article first appeared in Dot Zero, Spring 1967.

moving testimony, the parents of the abducted child, Madeleine McCann, told how photographers leapt out of hiding to startle them into giving "distorted" expressions that were used to convey them as "frail" or "fragile". [26] Such accounts led Dan Sabbagh to conclude that a "new set of villains have emerged: the photographers who at one time or another have besieged almost everyone else giving evidence."[27]

Another damaging issue for the profession is the recurring scandal of faked or "enhanced" digital pictures.[28] For instance, during the bitter 2006 conflict between Israel and Hamas the Reuters agency withdrew a "doctored" picture from circulation, suspending the stringer, Adnan Hajj. The aerial shot shows volumes of black smoke billowing up from a sector of Beirut. Reuters apologised for "changes" then issued a "corrected" version that is identical except that there is less smoke (and less "drama"). As one blogger noted, the effect of the electronically "cloned" picture was, "to make it appear that an Israeli missile strike did much more damage than it actually did."[29] Despite enforcing strict rules governing how far photographers can go to tweak their images legitimately, the industry seems powerless to stop such transgressions.

All this suggests that the greatest threat to a healthy press is not the actions of a few naive and untested outliers, but the unscrupulous or sloppy practices of professionals. _ also that readers are more demanding quote in other doc

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[26] Guardian 24 Nov 2011

[27] Guardian, Analysis 25 Nov 2011

[28] The first recorded instance of such tampering was in 1982 when staff at National geo digitally modified a horizontal image of the pyramids of Giza for publication.

[29] http://mypetjawa.mu.nu/archives/184203.php

Context/change

There is a substantial body of research within the social sciences into the precedents for the citizen writer, but comparatively little is known about the historical context of the citizen photographer. What there is of it tends to revolve around technology, which is consistent with most histories of photography. It is easy to see why the phenomenon is often attributed purely to technological advances. There is an obvious analogy to be made between the new 35mm camera that revolutionised the press in the 1930s and the ubiquitous, no-nonsense digital phone camera that has helped to facilitate citizens' photojournalism and video making. Tim Gidal recalls, "Most editors were very slow before 1926 in recognising true value of the Ermanox and Leica as instruments of the new 'Zeitgeist'."[30] Like the 35mm camera, the digital camera is small portable and easily mastered. The advantage digital cameras have is that users of the former can preview their images instantly then easily process and upload them. Another interesting parallel between the pioneering days of photojournalism and the present is that innovators of the small camera such as Salomon were - like many citizen journalists - mostly self-taught.[31] The technology of the internet is an important catalyst for the growth of citizens' photojournalism, undoubtedly. In the UK access appears to be increasing. In August 2010, 30.1 million (60%) adults are thought to have had accessed the internet on a daily basis

[30] Gidal Tim, MODERN PHOTOJOURNALISM - THE FIRST YEARS published in Creative Camera, July/August 1982

[31] Gidal Tim, MODERN PHOTOJOURNALISM - THE FIRST YEARS published in Creative Camera (July/August 1982)

compared with 16.5 million (35%) in 2006. (Office for National Statistics 2010). The digital revolution that changed the way photographers operate also affected picture desks. Well in advance of professionals arriving at the site of a breaking story, editors could begin to view images by amateurs on the spot. Former BBC staffer Richard Sambrook recalls that following the earthquake in Pakistan and India in October 2005, "the most vivid descriptions of what happened and its effects" reached the BBC in e-mails and texts from the area. Dennis Owen, photo editor of *The Globe and Mail* in Canada says that without citizens' journalism, "Many photo opportunities would be missed, and many stories would be told third-hand."[32]

While UGC has left many photojournalists sceptical about digital technology, others recognise opportunities in the new multi-media platforms that proliferate on the internet, such as audio-slideshows and rich media videos. One that operates in this area of "convergence" is the Englishman David Berman. Rather than disempowering him, technology gives him control he says, "What is a multimedia photojournalist? A photographer who is unafraid of learning new skills and technologies. A photographer who is passionate about telling stories, shooting compelling images be it still or video. I look at it as an opportunity to get back to being a story teller, not just a space filler for the print edition. I shoot, I edit and I publish." [33] Specialised production houses - such as Mediastorm - now exist to facilitate and disseminate multimedia. Mediastorm produced "The Marlboro Marine", a 16-minute documentary with voice-over for the internet. Made by Luis Sinco, it reveals the human story behind an iconic press image of a tough, cigarette-

[32] http://j-source.ca/article/rise-and-complications-citizen-photojournalism
[33] http://onlinejournalismblog.com/2010/02/26/interview-with-a-multimedia-photojournalist/

smoking marine called James Miller. Fred Ritchin welcomes such productions because they offer, "enormous new possibilities for storytelling in the hyper-textual environment of the web," [34] but he regrets that publishers are shy in taking advantage.

Such varied responses to technological innovation overshadow other, more complex developments that are transforming both journalism as a whole and societies, argues Hayley Watson. Besides technology the advent of citizens' journalism is attributed to the rise of something that experts call "participatory culture". In journalism this has roots in a tradition of independent production typified by the underground magazines of the 1960s and the zines of subsequent eras. Self published writing can be traced back, in the UK, to the 18th century pamphleteers, and in the US to the "amateur papers" of the beginning of the 19th century. Stephen Duncombe argues that the latter catered for voices that were absent from the mass-market press of the day. "Using both toy presses and printing equipment scavenged from the professional press, amateur journalism grew by leaps and bounds in the post-Civil war period. " An 1875 directory lists almost 500 such amateur publications.[35] Duncombe also describes how 30s science fiction fans (from whose self-published "fanzines" comes the word zine) initiated a self-publishing network. The fans "sent letters to Amazing Stories, then began writing to one another, and finally, started writing their own stories and producing their own

[34] http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/reports/article/102091/Failing-to-Harness-the-Webs-Visual-Promise.aspx
[35] Duncombe

publications, eradicating the distance between consumer and creator." [36] Participatory culture also has its critics. Andrew Keen, author of The Cult of the Amateur, fears that the rise of "amateur" content could be a recipe for, "the blind leading the blind".[37]

Arguably, photography has always enjoyed greater mass participation as a pastime than has writing, but its technical demands and expense have tended to restrict its use within self-publishing. One model of a photographic equivalent of the forerunners of citizens' writing might be the ideological worker-photography movements that flourished in Europe and the USSR between 1926 and 1939. Thousands of amateurs were trained by the Communist Party to take pictures that were disseminated via factory newspapers, wall publications and sympathetic magazines. In Germany worker-photographers were taught not only the technical aspects of photography, but also an awareness of the "bourgeois picture-lies" of the big magazines that employed Salmon[38]. The publisher Willi Münzenberg printed worker-photographer picture essays in his magazine AIZ and in the movement's organ, Der Arbeiter Fotograf (the Worker Photographer). The Soviet equivalent was Sovetskoe foto, "A monthly journal devoted to questions of photo amateurism and reportage"[39].

Since the internet, participatory culture has vastly increased, enabled by platforms such as blogs (Technocrati (2008) suggests that 133 million blogs have

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[36] Duncombe 108
[37] quoted in Watson H
[38] Marien, Photography A Cultural History, 294
[39] Wolf E, "The Soviet Union: From Worker to Proletarian Photography" http://otago.academia.edu/ErikaWolf/Papers/1076654/_The_Soviet_Union_From_Worker_to_Proletarian_Photography_

been created since 2002) and social networking sites including Facebook, Twitter and Flickr. It is thought that blogs are responsible for encouraging individuals to play an "active role" in the process of "collecting, reporting, sorting, analysing and disseminating news": a function that once belonged to the news media. It has been suggested that the 2011 protests in Tunisia and Egypt received "publicity" from social networking sites, and have even been credited as promoting social and political movements. Mostafa Bahgat posted raw footage of army brutality against Egyptian protestors on Utube to help counter the bias of the state media. "People in Egypt who only have access to state TV find it hard to believe that the army could hurt or kill anyone, or that the police, under the army's control could do the same," he says. "I want to enable them to think differently."[40]

Another precondition for citizen journalism in contemporary society, in Watson's opinion, is a "lived" experience within digital culture. She refers to Deuze's model of the Internet as an "amplifier" of participation and has created a culture of "participatory authorship". "This amplification of participation can be seen in the audience's ability to participate with the news media, in terms of the submission of information by individuals and the subsequent publication of that 'selected' information." The last major precondition for "dependent" citizen journalism, including distributing images to online outlets, is change - "organisational transition" - within the news media. The main news organisations have established an online presence that encourages greater audience interaction with content – "a key precondition for dependent citizen journalism". It comprises a

[40] Shenker Jack, Shots seen round the world: the cameraman at the heart of Tahrir Guardian 3 Dec 2011

series of formats including polls, message boards, comments on stories, blogs, reader blogs and so on. The BBC estimates that it gets an average of 10,000 e-mails or posts in a day to its "Have Your Say" site. [41]The BBC is just one major organisation that provides a portal to enable the easy uploading of UGC. Others include CNN and the Reuters agency.

An ideal press?

The media - newspapers and magazines, radio and television - still constitutes much of the so-called "public sphere" in any society. Robert C. Holub describes this hypothetical notion of a public sphere as the place where "something approaching public opinion is formed". He writes, "It should be distinguished both from the state, which represents official power, and from the economic structures of civil society as a whole. Its function is actually to mediate between society and state; it is the arena in which the public organizes itself, formulates public opinion, and expresses its desires vis-à-vis the government."[42] The existence of a space in which everyone should be heard is an ideal, but it responds to concerns that media ownership is in the hands of a few powerful organisations. Citizen journalists are identified with a widening of the discursive space of the public sphere through their activities as both dependent and independent news-gatherers and commentators. As a precedent for citizens' photojournalism the worker-photography movement of the 20s and 30s

[41] www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/theeditors
[42] Robert C. Holub, The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory & Criticism ?

demonstrates how press owners may be prevented from completely monopolising the public sphere. In this spirit, organisations have grown up with the internet that offer photographers a stake in contributing to a pluralised media in some societies. The Korean news agency, Oh-myNews is often mentioned in this connection. In 2000 the former journalist Oh Yeon Ho founded Oh-myNews. The organisation presently represents 65,000 citizen journalists and supports a staff of 70. In an interview with The New York Times in 2003, Oh hinted that a part of his motivation in launching OhmyNews was a desire to counter the bias in the provision of news in Korea. Oh explained: “We have a real imbalance in our media—80 percent conservative and 20 percent liberal—and it needs to be corrected. My goal is 50-50.” By 2000 the state had closed 49 of the 64 daily newspapers that were available in South Korea in 1961 because they contravened reporting regulations.[43] Jean K Min writes, "For lots of angry young Korean 'Netizens' who felt their voice was perennially ignored by the overwhelmingly conservative Korean mainstream media, OhmyNews was a godsend when it was launched in February 2000."[44]

Over the years people on the left have welcomed progressive manifestations, such as the worker-photography movement, as a counter norms of photography that serve the interests of capital. In the 1970s the worker-photography movement was the inspiration for "community photography" in Britain that saw Jo Spence and others training workers to use cameras to represent themselves. Another of Spence's inspirations, and the first theorist to articulate a radical photographic practice, was Walter Benjamin. As a Marxist, Benjamin would have been familiar

[43] http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/pda/2011/jan/19/ohmynews-korea-citizen-journalism
[44] http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/pda/2011/jan/19/ohmynews-korea-citizen-journalism

with the worker-photography movement. Writing in the 1930s during the rise of fascism and the expansion of the illustrated press, he differentiated between postures of radicalism found in public life and proper revolutionary action as advanced in the Soviet Union. He considered it the duty of those who supplied images to the "production apparatus" to change it. In his essay, The Author as Producer, Benjamin was especially critical of the newly enfranchised modern photographers, the Neue Sachlichkeit movement. He scorned the decision of Albert Renger-Patzsch to publish a book entitled The World is Beautiful (Die Welt ist schön) and suggested that the its aesthetic approach, "has succeeded in turning abject poverty itself, by handling it in a modish, technically perfect way, into an object of enjoyment." [45]Benjamin especially condemned this practice because he thought it converted revolutionary content into "amusements."

In the 1960s the English writer John Berger took up Benjamin's call for an alternative mode of photography, after he encountered a telling paradox. This was the presence of a damning Don McCullin photograph of a Vietnamese man clutching his bleeding child inside a magazine that supported American intervention into that country. "The task of an alternative photography," wrote Berger, "is to incorporate photography into social and political memory, instead of using it as a substitute which encourages the atrophy of any such memory ... For the photographer this means thinking of her or himself not so much as a reporter to the rest of the world, but, rather, as a recorder for those involved in the events photographed. The

[45] Benjamin W, The Author As Producer, Burgin V Ed Thinking Photography, 24

distinction is crucial."[46] In his book After Photography, Fred Ritchin speculates that under certain circumstances, citizens' photography might qualify as this "alternative" in our time. Though not legally a "publication", the web has shown itself to be an accessible, cheap and effective means of distributing images - an unregulated part of the public sphere. Ritchin is enthusiastic about the web as it nurtures new approaches to documentation that can cater for "those involved in the events photographed". In his book, Ritchin mentions a project called "Photographs by Iraqi Civilians" that maintains an internet presence because it struggled to find a publisher. In 2004 the Daylight Community Arts Foundation equipped ordinary Iraqis with cameras in an effort to counter the otherwise negative press representations of Iraq. "Photographs by Iraqi Civilians" consists of a slide show of these pictures that goes some way to give people in the news their own voices.[47]

We're Not Afraid.com is an interactive web site to which photographers upload images. Functioning as both a memorial and a site of protest, it serves a community that opposes terrorism. Set up in the aftermath of the 7/7 bombings by the English blogger Alfie Dennen, We're Not Afraid refers to the atrocities in London and other bombed cities such as New York and Madrid and the fear of ordinary citizens. Dennen asked for images that show, "We will not waste one moment, nor sacrifice one bit of our freedom, because of fear."[48] The site presently contains 700 galleries of upbeat snapshots, each captioned with the phrase, “We’re not afraid”. Because these are predominantly snaps of family life and friendships, the site has

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[46] quoted in Ritchin F, After Photography New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2009
[47] http://www.pixelpress.org/iraqi_civil/intro.html
[48] Panizza Allmark, M/C Journal Journal of Media and Culture
quoted http://www.journal.media-culture.org.au/0804/06-allmark.php

been criticised for drawing too much attention to the values of "predominantly white middle-class online participants". Yet, in its use of personal pictures instead of sensational images of violence that dominate the press, We're Not Afraid may be judged to subvert efforts "to incorporate photography into social and political memory" (as Berger wrote). Panizza Allmark writes, "Rather than focus on the tragic victim of traditional photojournalism, in which the camera is directed towards the other, the site promotes the sharing and triumph of personal moments. In the spotlight are 'everyday' modalities from 'everyday people' attempting to confront the rhetoric of terrorism. In their welcoming gaze to the camera the photographic subjects challenge the notion of the sensational image, the spectacle that is on show is that of middle-class modalities and a performance of collective power."[49]

How else can the internet address the kind of criticisms of photography that motivated Benjamin, Berger and others to demand an alternative? Benjamin was not opposed to a radical production that was also aesthetic, but argued that a progressive photography would need to deploy text to be saved from "modishness".

As we have seen photographers are innovating with new tools that enable text, stills and moving images to be synthesised to produce new web formations. One such project that may offer a partial reply to Benjamin's ideal is Nuclear Nightmares.[50]This interactive photo essay brings together the aesthetic approach of the photographer Robert Knoth and the fact-finding talents of Antionette de Jong. The site features Knoth's sombre, black-and-white photographs of people and places

[49] Panizza Allmark
[50] http://www.pixelpress.org/chernobyl/

that have been affected in various ways by exposure to the nuclear fallout from the Chernobyl plant. Hidden captions narrating the effects of nuclear contamination are embedded in every image. When a mouse passes over a section of the image a jarring caption appears, "sabotaging" its aesthetic purity. The viewer can use the mouse to conceal the caption and return to enjoying the formal qualities of the image, thus having their cake and eating it so to speak.

Benjamin concluded that an indicator for the radical potential of any work is the place its maker occupies *within* the relations of production. In light of this analysis, the position of UGC within the context of contemporary production constitutes its progressive potential. As we have seen, UGC is hostile to mainstream news in several respects: its technical and formal qualities are crude in relation to the media's desire for sophistication, and it is unverifiable. Futhermore, UGC is typically partisan, made out of passion, and the media demands objectivity. Benjamin argued that a guage of the effectiveness of a progressive "apparatus" was that it "will be the better, the more consumers it brings in contact with the production process - in short, the more readers or spectators it turns into collaborators." The presence of readers' images in media outlets encourages wider participation in the business of news (though this content may not all be "progressive"). The Arab Spring events of 2011 shone a spotlight on web formats can enhance further the potential of UGC to erode traditional lines between producer and consumer. CrowdVoice is a platform that, "tracks voices of protest from around the world by crowdsourcing." Its backer Mideast Youth, describes itself as an "independent grassroots movement" founded to "amplify diverse and

progressive voices advocating for change in the Middle East and North Africa using digital media."[51]By selecting one heading from a list of "featured voices" - such as "Tibetan Monks Protest Against China" or "Kurdish Protests Against Assad" - users access content by citizen eye-witnesses. They may upload their own content and access links that provide the context for the UGC. Small World News, a conduit for web journalism from teams around the world, offers to train citizens to deploy news-gathering technology. Its site contains a downloadable DIY "Guide to Safely and Securely Producing Media" that has sections about planning, production, uploading (compression, file formats, etc) ethics, and personal risk.

Do these various "unconventional" photographic formats constitute a genuine alternative photography, or are they destined to be assimilated into the spectacle of news after their novelty fades? Citizens' journalism is a dynamic, exciting area in which things change quickly, and few dare predict what will happen. Even its critics concede that citizens' journalism has brought change. It has changed visual news-gathering forever so there is no going back to the "golden age". Spurred on by events of the Arab Spring, the old newspaper practice of "editorial distance" is fast giving way to "collaborative" journalism in which readers are offered a greater stake in what news is covered, how it is gathered and presented. The insider's view of breaking events ("History's New First Draft" as Newsweek online called it) has achieved mass appeal. Finally, new, innovative kinds of photographic practice are emerging that use the same networked technologies that UGC pioneered. On the other hand, it should be remembered that the internet - while hailed as the catalyst

[51] http://crowdvoice.org/about

of revolutions - is also the home of Utube. This is where much UGC - whether it's dissenters in Syria or clever kittens in California - co-exists in an eerie state of moral and intellectual relativism that Benjamin could barely imagine.

Arts

Despite a history of tensions between what we might call aesthetic and activist attitudes within photography, there has been a long tradition of exhibitions by "committed" artistic photographers of various types - from photojournalists such as W Eugene Smith to conceptual photographers such as Alfredo Jaar. The most fabled of these exhibitions is probably The Family of Man, staged by the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1955. Shortly after the invention and testing of the H Bomb, this extravaganza toured the world, including the USSR, promoting "universal values". In contained work from the most reputable photographers in the US and Europe, including Ansel Adams, Robert Frank and many from the Magnum agency. By contrast, documentary photographs by activists and amateurs (classified as "vernacular photography") rarely gain admittance to the hallowed realm of the gallery. This is usually explained away by saying that such content is stylistically incompatible with prescribed aesthetic criteria. Now and then such imagery *does* enter a gallery, but generally as the "appropriated" content of an artist that deploys it ironically or in some way critically. There are signs that the phenomenon of UGC is forcing change within the conservative bastions of the art of photography. One indicator was the 2011 Arles photography festival in France that featured many

images from the internet. The oldest of the photography festivals, Arles is often seen as a litmus to changing tastes in a sector that is generally dismissive of much of photography as kitsch. Among the work at Arles was a composite by Penelope Umbrico consisting of over 8 million images of the sun, all from Flickr. The Dutch artist Mishka Henner presented a series of altered images from Google Earth that the Dutch authorities had mysteriously censored. By far the most interesting work, in the opinion of Ben Burbridge, deputy editor of Photoworks magazine, was a multi-screen projection by Claudia Sola called "Being There". This drew content from across the internet - from medical scans to family snapshots. Burbridge likes "Being There" because it "approaches mass culture in a spirit of empathy and understanding, rather than irony and difference." Some of the pictures Sola selected were taken at Abu Ghraib. For Burbridge these pose a special challenge to the gatekeepers of the art institutions charged with keeping abreast with trends in photography.

"The manner in which [the pictures] changed, or represented changes to, the roles and significance of photography within culture cannot help but shape understandings of how institutions should aim to respond to this new photographic landscape."[52]

Burbridge wonders how long the arts sector can ignore the fact that photography's cultural importance lies more and more in its functioning, than in its form. He writes, "The significance of those pictures lay not in what they looked like,

[52] http://www.photoworks.org.uk/blog/post/00000000011

in aesthetics and issues of form, but in issues of instrumentality, information, and use: why they were made and by whom; the abuses they depicted and why these took place; how the leaking of the pictures resulted in new functions, offering a damning form of insider testimony; and, more generally, how changing technologies have shaped such possibilities." It will be interesting to see how far art institutions may be prepared to go to embrace this kind of content and meet the challenges it poses to existing ontologies of "photography".

Conclusion

Photography revolutionized the press by giving every reader a window into the world. Now, digital photography is helping to change the press yet again by blurring the lines between those who make news and those who find themselves in the news. Despite all the changes, the power of photograph remains undiminished. The difference today is that it doesn't matter who uses it.

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